

July 12, 2022

La Crosse Common Council Members,

First, thank you for your service to our community. I understand the commitment to serve and thank you for your commitment to our region.

I wanted to write this letter to ask for your support of our proposal for a conditional use permit for our property at 310 N. 8th St. We want to share a few thoughts related to this request that may help you understand Western's current priorities. Western Technical College and the City of La Crosse have been strong partners throughout much of our existence.

Western is committed to serving the people in our region. Our La Crosse location is the center of workforce in healthcare, IT, advanced manufacturing, public safety, agriculture, business, and childcare, to name a few. We have proudly invested in this community and this region to serve the employers in the area. Even more importantly, Western lifts up the least privileged people in our community. From GED, diploma, and associate degrees, we help citizens earn skills that lead to life-sustaining wages.

As many of you know, Western entered into a 10-year agreement with the city in 2019 to better facilitate processes for development within our campus boundaries. It provides clarified boundaries and property goals. It was designed to provide clarity and the flexibility to purchase and tear down property without negotiating agreements every time. In return, Western provides a sizable sum for municipal services as an offset for lost tax revenue. We understand this governing body is composed of different members from when this agreement was reached, but we ask that you honor the years of work on that agreement.

As I mentioned at the start, Western and the City of La Crosse have been strong partners for many years. In fact, Western understands the housing crisis and its impact on our community. Since 1996, students in the Building Construction and Cabinetmaking program have partnered with the City to help build single-family homes in La Crosse neighborhoods, using CBD grants and HOME investment funds. It's a partnership that has won numerous awards and provided our students with skills they need to enter the workforce. I believe that we have built about 47 new homes for low-income families in our downtown area.

La Crosse Common Council Members
Page 2
July 12, 2022

One of the concerns that we heard from council members was the potential for the property to be converted into parking, rather than greenspace. While this was included in a three-year facilities plan presented to the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), there is no funding to convert the property into anything but greenspace. Western is still recovering from the student impacts of COVID, and still evaluating parking needs for the future. In addition, the current condition of the property in question is unfeasible for further housing development as it stands. Western has offered the property to both the La Crosse Police and Fire Departments for training scenarios prior to demolition. Both the City of La Crosse and Western Technical College have been tremendous partners, and we expect that relationship to continue in the future.

Outside of our 200-bed residence hall, it is simply not in the mission of Western to provide housing on any specific property it owns. This piece of property brings liability and safety concerns for our community if the property remains standing.

My final note is on our absolute commitment to the citizens in our community to improve the lives of students and grow our communities. We are committed to poverty-informed practices across all of our college.

Thank you for your consideration and your long-time support of our work to help lift students in our region up.

Respectfully,



Roger Stanford, PhD
President